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Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance and healthcare specialists at M3.

Cellphone Use Behind the Wheel

When was the last time you talked on your cellphone or texted while driving? If you are like most drivers on the road today, this is a regular occurrence. But increasing evidence reveals the dangerous link between cellphone use behind the wheel and motor vehicle accidents.

The Risk and Dangers

Because the attention of many drivers may be diverted due to multi-tasking behind the wheel, the cellphone has become one of the most common and deadly driver distractions. Originally used as aids in emergency situations such as calling for roadside assistance, cellphones have become much more than that today. Many drivers use their cellphones to turn their cars into mobile offices, to catch up with friends and family, or to simply squeeze more productive time into their days.

Cellphone use is especially dangerous because drivers cannot safely divide their attention between the road and their conversations. When talking on your cellphone while driving is absolutely necessary, research indicates that hands-

free cellphones will help keep your hands on the wheel, but could still keep your mind from focusing on the road.

The American Automobile Association (AAA) asserts that texting, specifically, requires full attention, taking drivers' attention off the road. Not only that, but for every 2 seconds that a driver's eyes stray from the road, they are twice as likely to have an accident, according to AAA.

You may not view texting while driving as seriously as you view drunk driving, but Car and Driver magazine performed a study that compared the two and made some interesting observations. Test subjects in the study had much slower reaction times to brake lights in front of them when texting than they did when intoxicated. Texting while driving is a serious threat to your safety and the safety of others.

State Laws

Many states already have laws prohibiting the use of cellphones and texting while driving. These laws are changing frequently, so

be sure to know what the restrictions are in your state. For more information on state requirements, visit www.ghsa.org.

Do's and Don'ts

Follow these simple tips for driving and texting behind the wheel:

- DO follow all state and local regulations regarding cellphone use while driving. It is your responsibility to know the laws.
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- DO use a hands-free device if you need to make a call while driving, or pull off the road safely before calling.
- DO let voicemail take calls if you cannot answer the phone safely.
- Do NOT surf the Web, send or read texts, or use any other cellphone function that takes your eyes and attention off the road.
- Do NOT use any function of your wireless device in heavy traffic, severe weather or other hazardous conditions.

Did You Know...?

Using a cellphone while behind the wheel has become a common and deadly driver distraction.